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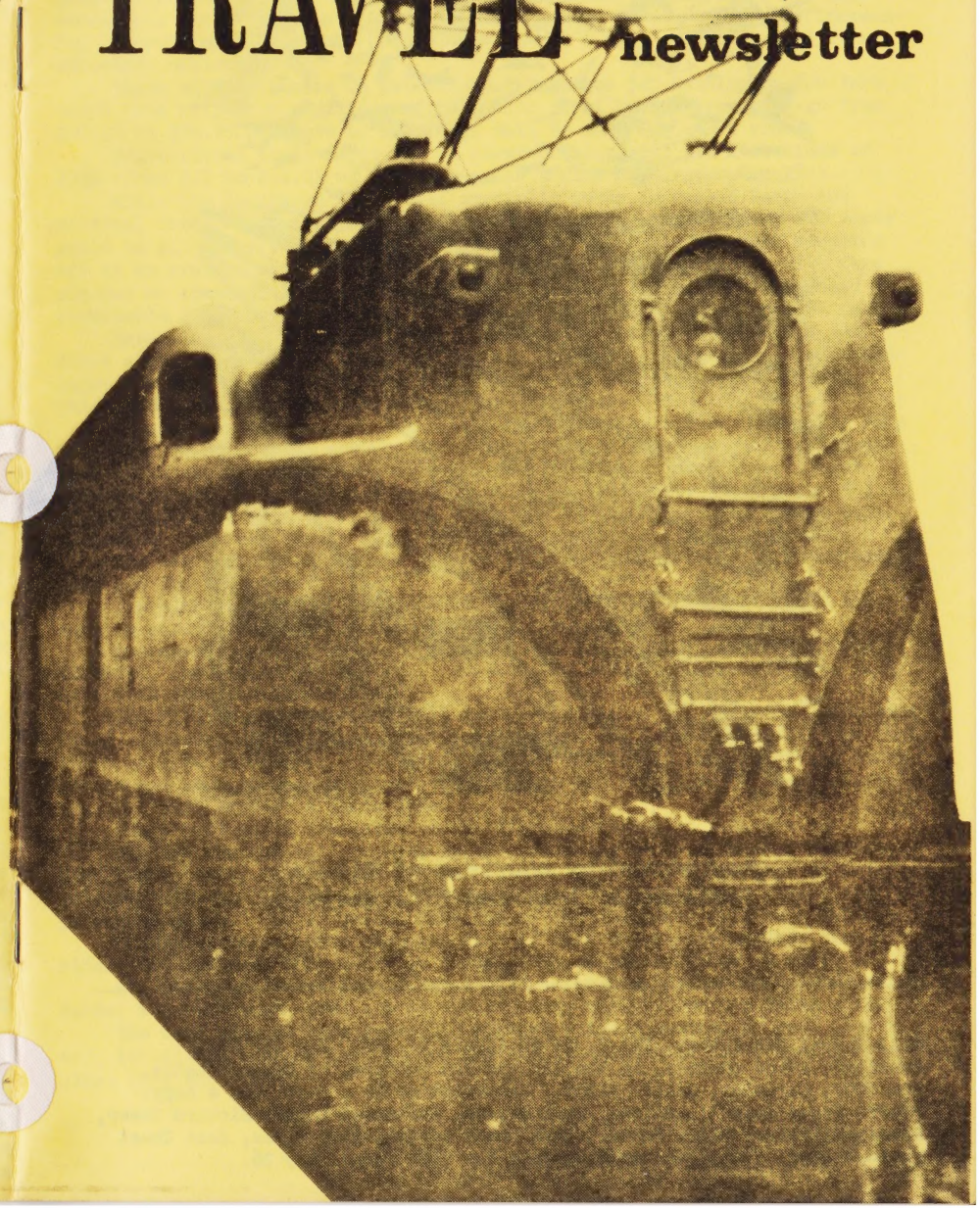
RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

Vol. 2 No. 10
May 15, 1972
#36



ON THE COVER: One of the famous Penn Central GG-1 electric locomotives in Amtrak paint of red, platinum mist and blue. Photographed by Steve Farrar at Amtrak's anniversary display at Washington D.C. April 30. Steve described the display in our last issue, and further information about it appears in East Coast Report in this issue.

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Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 2, No 10 (Whole No. 36), May 15, 1972. Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Subscription $6 a year; 25¢ a copy. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Richard Tower, Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer. Projected mailing date for this issue: May 26.

AMTRAK ANNOUNCES MAJOR CHANGES IN RAIL FARES

Beginning June 11, the time of summer schedule changes, there will also be alterations in fares on 14 Amtrak routes, the corporation announced in a May 15 press release.

The changes were designed to equalize fares over the nation. Frequent criticism had been made of the fact that eastern riders generally paid more per mile than western riders. By increasing fares 5-10% on four long-distance western and southern routes, and decreasing them 10-25% on ten short- and long-distance routes in the east, midwest and west, Amtrak hopes to "make economical train travel available to more people, boost revenues by increasing ridership, and move the Corporation toward a more equitable rail fare structure nationwide."

There will be boosts in Metroliner fares: the $17 Washington-New York coach fare will rise a maximum of $2, while first class fares will go from $27.40 to $30.90. Boosts of 50¢ to $1 will be made for short rides.

Conventional train fares in the same corridor will see reductions of 13½%--from $13 to $11.25 on the 14 regular trains Washington-New York.

While the increased fares will partially cover increased labor and material costs, the main benefit, said Amtrak, will be "filling up the empty seats on all our problem routes." While train ridership had been dropping off at an average rate of 15% per year, Amtrak's experimentation with fare slashes on conventional Northeast Corridor trains last December produced a remarkable 32% increase in traffic north of New York, the corporation said.

Expanding this experimentation, Amtrak will cut coach fares 20% and first class fares 10% on these six routes: New York-Chicago; Washington-Chicago; New York-St. Louis-Kansas City; Washington-St. Louis-Kansas City; Chicago-Detroit; and Seattle-Oakland/San Francisco.

In addition to the fare cut on the Oakland-Seattle route, a Family Fare Plan will be introduced whereby wives of full-fare passengers and children ages 12-21 will get one-third off full fare, while children under 12 get two-thirds off. (Presumably there is still no charge for those under 5.) SP had abolished family fares some years ago in its efforts to reduce rail patronage. The new family fares apparently apply only to coach travel.

The New York-Buffalo route and the POTOMAC SPECIAL route to Parkersburg will get 10% reductions.

Travelers on the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY will get 25% cuts in coach fares and 10% reductions in first class.

Increases of about 10% will occur on the SUPER CHIEF, the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and the EMPIRE BUILDER. (Presumably the new CHIEF will also fall into this fare category.)

The CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO will get fare rises of 10%, but the much-criticized surcharge of $10 first class and $5 coach for interstate travel on that train will be eliminated. Western observers agree that the SP-imposed extra charge has been dampening travel to Reno from San Francisco, a short run but one that just crosses a state line.

There will be 5% increases on the Florida-Washington D.C. trains.

No fare changes will be made on the following routes: Chicago-Florida; New York-Florida; Chicago-New Orleans; Chicago-St. Louis; Los Angeles-New Orleans; Chicago-Quincy; San Francisco/Oakland-Los Angeles/San Diego; and Chicago-Houston. The NY-Boston fare cut of last December will remain.

President Roger Lewis promised that if fare reductions produce more riders and revenue, they would be inaugurated on other routes as well.

The above-mentioned family fares will represent uniform nationwide standards; wherever such fares are in effect, they will follow the rules given.

The fare changes were generally greeted with enthusiasm by rail observers, but disappointment that Amtrak has not yet announced its projected one-class fare structure.

ROUTE BY ROUTE SUMMARY
ON-TIME PERFORMANCE
1ST QUARTER 1972

Routes	Trains Operated 1st Qtr	Percent On-Time 1st Qtr 1972	4th Qtr 1971	3rd Qtr 1971
SHORT HAUL				
New York/Washington				
Conventional	2194	93.9	88.4	80.4
Metroliner	1910	85.0	64.4	84.3
Boston/Washington	991	79.9	73.0	83.3
New York/Boston				
Shore Route	625	85.4	76.8	69.1
Inland Route	1156	88.1	74.1	82.4
New York/Buffalo	1328	78.1	76.6	74.5
Philadelphia/Harrisburg	1323	94.1	94.2	93.8
Washington/Parkersburg	184	74.5	91.2	93.5
Chicago/Carbondale	236	78.4	77.7	84.8
Chicago/Detroit	368	91.8	87.1	80.4
Chicago/Quincy	182	81.9	89.4	--
Milwaukee/St. Louis	368	76.9	60.7	52.2
Chicago/Milwaukee	617	95.1	97.3	98.2
Seattle/Portland	366	68.0	80.8	74.1
Oakland/Los Angeles	102	90.2	76.9	71.9
Los Angeles/San Diego	368	96.5	93.7	86.6
TOTAL SHORT HAUL	12,318	84.9	81.4	80.6
LONG DISTANCE ROUTES (Amtrak)				
New York/Chicago	380	75.5	64.5	70.5
New York/Florida	911	63.0	53.1	60.5
New York/Kansas City	189	40.2	44.5	37.5
Washington/St. Louis	187	54.0	61.0	55.4
Cincinnati/Newport News	182	40.7	53.3	83.0
Chicago/Boston	182	49.5	26.5	--
Chicago/Florida	364	48.1	25.6	64.7
Chicago/New Orleans	182	31.3	41.2	48.2
Chicago/Houston	182	88.5	88.7	92.9
Chicago/Los Angeles	182	84.6	69.2	53.6
Chicago/Denver	101	87.1	55.8	62.5
Chicago/Oakland	78	83.3	51.3	43.7
Chicago/Seattle	182	43.3	62.1	49.1
Chicago/Minneapolis	102	83.3	48.2	--
Chicago/Minneapolis/Spokane	77	55.8	60.3	35.0
New Orleans/Los Angeles	77	72.7	48.7	56.2
Seattle/San Diego	76	65.8	50.0	10.4
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	3,634	61.0	53.8	60.4
TOTAL AMTRAK	15,952	80.9	74.3	76.9

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

(Editor's note: RTN is in danger of losing East Coast Editor Steve Farrar. Steve's Army battalion, the 714th TBROS&DE--714th Transportation Battalion, Railway Operating, Steam and Diesel-Electric--, is due to be abolished some time in June. It is now the only active railway battalion in the world. If it is abolished, the Army Transportation Corps will then include everything but rail. Steve is now a conductor, and was expecting his last run on May 20. He is hoping against hope that a letter-writing campaign to Congressmen might yet stay the abolition of his battalion. Otherwise, the chances are high that he would be transferred overseas. We don't want to lose you, Steve!)

POTOMAC TURBO MISSES OWN FUNERAL--The POTOMAC TURBO was supposed to run from Parkersburg to Washington for the last time May 13, but it broke down and a conventional train substituted. The standard train now carries refurbished Amtrak cars. Schedule: weekdays, lv Parkersburg 3:15am, lv Washington 4:50pm; weekends, lv Parkersburg 10:35am, lv Washington 11am. Running time is unchanged from previous standard train schedule.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY #222 leaves every morning at 7 from Greensboro, N.C., and carries a coach from that point to Washington, but no one can board the train until it becomes No. 8 at Lynchburg.

KENTUCKY DERBY SPECIAL--There was at least one this year. It left Washington about 7am and operated Salisbury, Asheville and Knoxville, arriving Louisville over 24 hours later, the day before the Derby. When observed by RTN's Doug Ellis in Knoxville about 11pm, the special consisted of four SR green E units lettered "Southern Crescent," one silver rider coach, and 15 SR office cars.

APRIL 30 Southern Railway changes: Southbd SOUTHERN CRESCENT was speeded up by ½-hr between Atlanta and New Orleans, arriving at 7:30pm. All flagstops which were made only by No. 5 and not No. 6 were dropped. Incidentally, thru Boston service via SR continues, while Boston-Florida cars were dropped April 29.

MORE OBSERVATIONS made at Union Station, Washington (May 15): The NATIONAL LTD arrived 3hrs 40mins late with one PC E unit and one SCL coach. Five passengers.

The BROADWAY LTD connection, No. 541, left with the following consist: PC GG-1, Amtrak baggage 1038, UP 44-seat coach, SCL 6 bdr-lounge "Virginia Beach," and UP 10rmt/6bdr. These were unrefurbished cars.

POTOMAC SPECIAL consist to Parkersburg: B&O E unit, Amtrak coach 7251, Amtrak diner-coach 8411 (both refurbished). This train replaced the POTOMAC TURBO.

"COLLECTOR'S ITEM" timetable was inadvertently printed by Southern Railway for April 30, but quickly recalled--but not before some fell into railfans' hands. The 4-page schedule showed Washington-Lynchburg trains 7 & 8 running only between Washington and Sweet Briar.

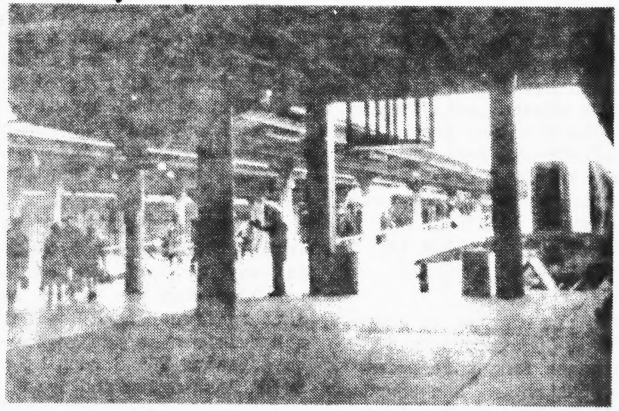
RIDERSHIP of the Northeast to Florida trains remained level last December, dropped 15% in the first 3 months of 1972, and rose 25% in April. The SILVER METEOR had increases in all months, the CHAMPION remained even, and the FLORIDA SPECIAL and SILVER STAR lost patronage. The early schedule out of New York is considered to be the downfall of the SILVER STAR.

MISCELLANY... The May 1972 Official Guide is the last one with an Amtrak entry... Last and only timetables issued by railroads for Amtrak were the following on April 30: all PC, BN Chicago-Quincy, IC, C&O...

The consolidated METEOR-CHAMPION will have a flagstop at Petersburg, Va. Quantico flagstop will be dropped... Eight ex-New Haven coaches are getting Amtrak refurbishing... Canadian National will establish true autotrain service this summer between Toronto and Edmonton only on the SUPER CONTINENTAL. Service will begin at the same time the train begins running in two sections... Canadian Pacific is adding a 50%

page 5

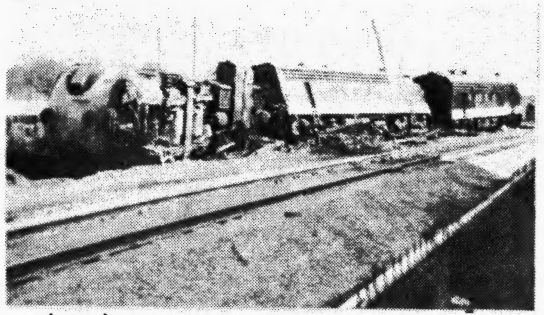
summer surcharge to accommodation charge on all sleeper space except roomettes... BROADWAY LTD and SILVER METEOR are the only trains with daily hostess service currently... Effective May 1, Amtrak no longer requires military personnel to wear uniforms to receive 25% discount... Amtrak reportedly once planned auto-train service for the COAST STARLIGHT this summer, apparently using an Autoliner auto carrier converted from a UP coach... Washington D.C. redcaps got fancy new caps to replace their grubby leather ones May 1... Amtrak No. 51 has a new gate sign at Washington labeled GEORGE WASHINGTON. Has the name been changed?... Amtrak by mid-April had bought 63 locomotives and negotiations were final on 106 more... Amtrak got three new mail routes in its first year: Chicago-Minneapolis, Chicago-Fargo, and Jacksonville-Miami (extension of New York-Jacksonville)... A band played in the recreation car of the May 2 westbound BROADWAY LTD as far as Philadelphia, and a pianist played the electronic piano beyond that...

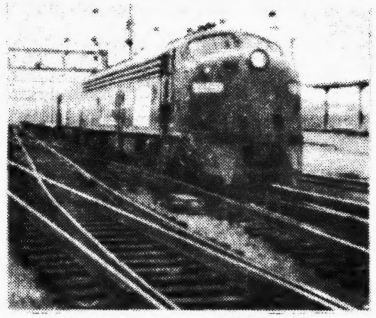


In the last issue we reported on Amtrak's First Anniversary exhibit at Washington Union Station. Here are some photos to accompany that report (photos by Steve Farrar).

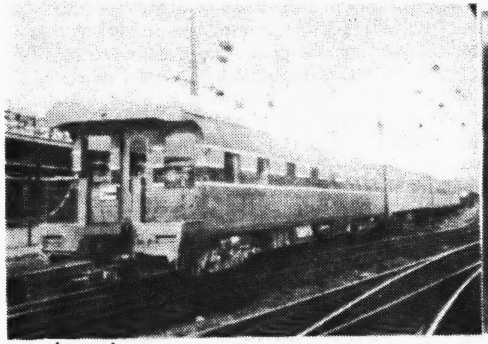
Passengers detrain from a Metroliner at Washington on April 30. Photography here is difficult. Reader David Soderblom tells us that before Amtrak there was no restriction on non-ticket-holding persons on train platforms; one could walk about the train sheds unimpeded, except for Metroliner platforms (but you could reach them from the far end). Beginning in the spring of 1971 the signs went up and gates were locked.

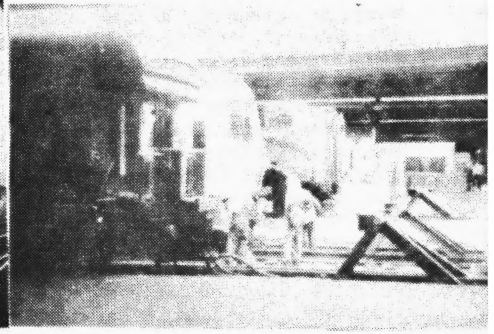
In the next issue of RTN, Steve Farrar gives a first-hand report on a trip on AUTO-TRAIN, with photos by Doug Ellis.





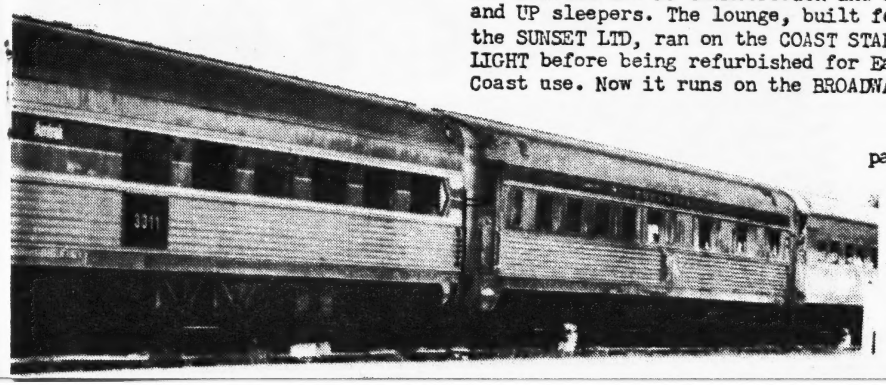
(Left) The first train wreck picture to appear in RTN: Southern Railway's northbound PIEDMONT #6 of April 27 at Arlington, Va., looked like this on the 29th. The southbound passenger mainline had been restored in the foreground. A Penn Central boxcar that derailed caused the accident, in which 5 were injured. (Right) The last consolidated BROADWAY LTD/NATIONAL LTD pulls into Washington April 30, one hour late due to changeover to advanced standard time, with unusual consist described in our last issue.





(Left) On rear of BROADWAY seen in previous photo, the Autoliner business car 100, with Amtrak striping, that was to carry VIPs for anniversary run of the train, pulls into D.C. April 30. (Right) Workers examine equipment at the bumper post in Washington preparatory to May 1 display: from front to rear, SR office car, Metroliner for display, GG-1 for display (see also our front cover), the 3:05pm SENATOR conventional train ready to leave for Boston, and in the background a Metroliner.

Photo below (courtesy of G. W. Gerhart) shows ex-SP Amtrak recreation lounge 3311 on the FLORIDA SPECIAL at Miami before its seasonal discontinuation. Also in the consist are NP slumbercoach and SP and UP sleepers. The lounge, built for the SUNSET LTD, ran on the COAST STARLIGHT before being refurbished for East Coast use. Now it runs on the BROADWAY.



NARP CONTINUES CRITICISM OF AMTRAK

Senator Lowell P. Weicker, who was harsh in his criticism of Amtrak on the Senate floor early in May, commented there that he had attended Amtrak's anniversary ceremonies in Washington and viewed the refurbished cars of the BROADWAY LTD. Said Weicker, "Congress did not intend to hire an interior decorator when it voted to bring Amtrak into being. ... All Mr. Lewis has done has been to ask for operating deficit subsidies, dress up the decadence of his equipment, and, at somebody's order, have Amtrak 'make a dive.'"

Recalling these words, NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell wrote Sen. Weicker May 16 as follows: "Last night, May 15, I rode the "Broadway" from Chicago to Washington. My observations of the allegedly 'refurbished' equipment were harsh confirmation of your views." Haswell then recounted defects that he observed in the refurbished cars:

"The carpet in coach 4416 was filthy. One vestibule door on coach 4411 was defective and would not close properly. The same was true of one door on the lounge car. A steam leak between the lounge car and the diner made it almost impossible to see in the vestibule area between those two cars. The door into this vestibule on diner 4611 was very difficult to open, once properly closed. Bedroom sleeper 2235 rode excessively noisy, almost like a baggage or freight car. I suspect that very little work was done on the trucks and running gear of any of these cars. Slumbercoach 2001 had bad doors at both ends; a loose drinking fountain which caused an annoying rattle; several defective toilets which allowed track noise to be heard inside the car; and at least one defective heat valve that could not be turned off.

"The windows on the rear observation car which look out behind the train were filthy. The fact that this identical shortcoming existed on the 'Broadway' when I rode it in September 1966 from Chicago to New York is probably no mere coincidence. I suspect that the same people who didn't care in 1966 are still assigned to the same job and have the same attitude."

Haswell then told of a reservations snafu. Space to Washington was said to be sold out, but in fact an additional car was put on, and proved to be nearly empty, since ticket sellers had no knowledge of it until the last minute. (As a footnote to his earlier letter to Weicker--see RTN, May 1--in which he described another frustrating reservations encounter, Haswell said that Washington Union Station had no record of his reservation on that earlier occasion when he appeared at the "will call" window.)

NARP concluded by urging Weicker "to keep up your efforts to bring about a change in Amtrak top management," and suggested that the Senate Commerce Committee make Amtrak provide specific details on its car renovation program so that the Congress and the public can evaluate it.

AMTRAK MONEY WON'T BE INCREASED

The probability is, according to the Wall Street Journal (May 19), that the funding request for Amtrak now being considered by a joint House-Senate committee to forge a compromise between the bills passed by the two houses of Congress, will not be raised higher than the $170 million passed by the House—the amount recommended by the Nixon administration.

The Senate had earlier voted to increase Amtrak's funding by $417 million over the $170 million, and some senators were infuriated at Amtrak's response that it could not "possibly commit" more than the smaller sum (see RTN, May 1). The New York Times (May 14) indicated that the administration had forced Amtrak to make that statement, while privately the corporation was admitting that it "desperately" wants the extra money. The paper said that both Amtrak President Roger Lewis and DOT Secretary John Volpe wanted the larger Senate amount, but that they had no choice except to abide by the recommendation of the Office of Management and Budget.

Meanwhile, on May 16 the Office of Management and Budget got a new head—Caspar W. Weinberger, former State Finance Director under Gov. Reagan of California. Weinberger is reportedly more conservative in public spending than the former budget chief. If so, under the present administration Amtrak could expect even less support than it has had to date.

TRAIN RIDERSHIP GOING UP, AMTRAK SAYS

Speaking in Chicago late this month, Amtrak President Roger Lewis said that in the first quarter of 1972 his corporation apparently reversed the long-term downhill trend in passenger train ridership. It had been falling at a rate of 10-15% a year before Amtrak. During that quarter, Amtrak's revenue increased over 8% from projected figures. Mr. Lewis said these facts give "a solid basis for hope, if not downright optimism, that we have turned the corner." The increases came even before recent improvements such as refurbished equipment and special tour promotions.

AMTRAK LISTENS TO WEST COAST RAIL TRAVELERS

At a dinner meeting in San Francisco May 15, Western Regional Manager Robert Edgar, other Amtrak representatives, staff members of RTN and Passenger Train Journal, representatives of the California Association of Railroad Passengers and of Northern California rail clubs, travel agents and city planning organizations got together to exchange ideas about rail service in the West.

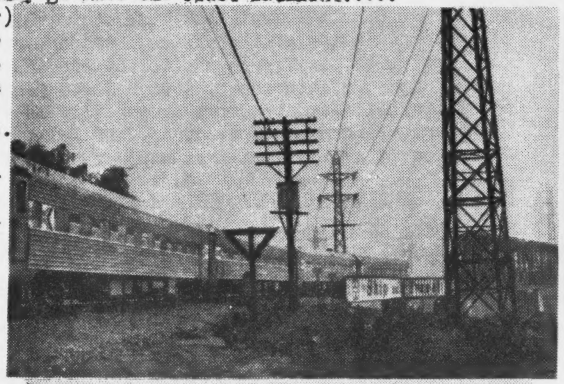
Some of the major suggestions made to Amtrak were the initiation of service to the Lake Tahoe area thru Truckee, in the form of ski trains or summer resort trains with bus connections to the lake, possibly with tie-ins with resorts and casinos in the big vacation area. Some feelers have already been made to SP about ski trains, and the railroad predictably is balking at the idea. San Joaquin Valley service was also mentioned. This has been discussed at high levels in the corporation, Amtrak said, and is still under consideration, though lack of state support is a problem. Revival of overnight San Francisco-Los Angeles service (the LARK) always seems to come up in such meetings. Richard Tower of RTN presented Amtrak with a written report of suggestions for stimulating college student patronage of trains.

Mr. Edgar indicated that five alternative proposals for dealing with the expensive Los Angeles station have been considered. He did not indicate whether one had yet been decided upon.

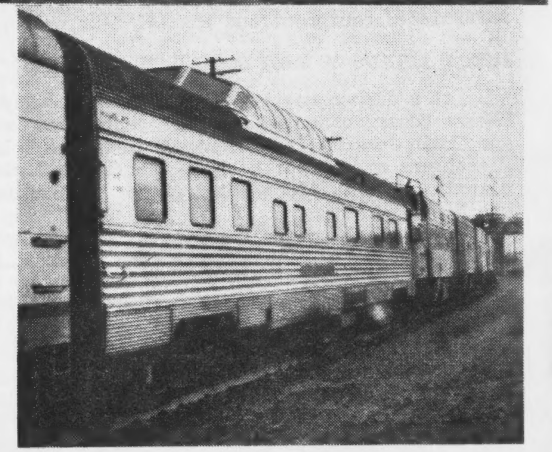
Refurbished Amtrak coach 4411 was among those units of Amtrak equipment running on the BROADWAY LIMITED early in May that NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell found to have noticeable defects. Photo courtesy of Mike Martino.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

"THREE PHOTOS of the same railroad car in one issue?" someone asked. Well, actually, no. Those three shots of roundend cars on the STARLIGHT in the last issue of RTN were of two cars. The one on page 8 was the first ex-SCL lounge featured in the March 20 issue. Those on pages 10 and 14 were of a sister car that went on one of the other two sets of STARLIGHT equipment about mid-April. It doesn't show in the photos, but at the time the car still read "Seaboard Coast Line" on the sides. The two cars are due to come off the train this summer, to be replaced by mid-train full lounges. Rumor has it that the observations may go onto the COAST DAYLIGHT.....



THE TRAIN at the right (upper) is the SUPER CHIEF. The photo by Paul Rayton shows the last four sleepers on the train in new Amtrak paint. It's just pulling into Los Angeles here. Sorry we can't show you the color from the original Kodacolor. Notice the sign still reading "Ship and travel Santa Fe." The photo below it represents a sad story. It's SCL "Moonlight Dome" sleeper, and it's deadheading east on the CITY OF SF on May 15. This is the car that SP used in the infamous "lean and roll" tests that "proved" that it couldn't run on SP routes. The car had been in storage in Sacramento for some months before return to Oakland to deadhead back for reported use on PC. Presumably the car made it over Donner Summit without leaning or rolling into one of those huge auto racks coming down the grade. Photo by Message Media.....



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIANS attention: L.A. Union Station has Apr. 30 Western Amtrak timetables but no others. Go to Pasadena to get Eastern Amtrak schedules. Of course it makes sense: Pasadena is east of Los Angeles, isn't it?..... MAY FIFTH report tells us that the new concourse in Chicago Union Station is open, but finishing-up work still remains..... POTOMAC SPECIAL, replacing POTOMAC TURBO takes train nos. 640 and 641 (weekdays) and 642 and 643 (weekends and holidays. Schedule says it has a magazine library; no checked baggage..... FIRST CLASS fares will be reinstated on C&O/B&O June 11 (but Santa Fe will remain one-class). Extra surcharge for interstate travel on COAST DAYLIGHT/STARLIGHT will be eliminated along with that of CITY OF SF. The new CHIEF will not have extra fare. Minimum tickets for bedroom on Amtrak system will be 1½ full fares; for bedroom suite 3 full fares..... ABOUT 2100 passengers per day torture themselves in bus travel between NY and Washington while (in

March) about 1900 people traveled by train (both Metro and conventional) between those two points. On June 11 two more conventional trains will be added to the NY-Washington run..... REMEMBER SURF?--that flagstop on the SP Coast Route that got dropped when Amtrak started up? Remember how people went there to go surfing, or to get to Vandenberg Air Force Base nearby? Well, Sunday May 21 a 22-car Amtrak special of SP equipment ran from L.A. to Surf, under sponsorship of Pacific RR Society, the 840 passengers actually destined for Lompoc. The train turned there and went back to L.A. the same day, having stopped at Glendale, Santa Susana, and Santa Barbara. Consist was 3 diners, 2 lounges, and 17 coaches. Could any reader donate a photo of it to print in RTN?..... OPERATIONS DEPT. of Amtrak gets a daily report of the on-time performance of each of its trains, with reasons for delays, if any. Reasons make interesting reading, ranging from stopping for freight with engines afire to failure of a callboy to call a trainman..... NARP missed a month's newsletter publication this month because Joseph Vranich slipped in a parking lot and broke both elbows. Next time take the train, Joe.....

* * *

DONALD RUSSELL retired as Chairman of SP May 17 and took the occasion to say that "it's impossible for long distance train travel to pay its way any place in the world." Goodbye, Don. (Actually he's not going far, and his anti-passenger policies promise to persist at SP)..... TRAINS MAGAZINE has its annual speed survey in the June issue, and this time it lists present, past and bus times for all Amtrak routes..... FIRST BART test car, #101, apparently is going to be scrapped rather than preserved for posterity, reports Harre Demoro in the Oakland Tribune..... CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for April 27 makes interesting reading, being filled with Senate debate on Amtrak funding. Sen. Cranston of California called for San Joaquin Valley service, Sen. Fulbright of Arkansas wanted a route thru Little Rock, and both of them lost out. In the final voting, only 7 senators opposed the money bill: Brock (Tenn.), Church (Idaho), Ellender (La.), Fulbright (Ark.), Jordan (Idaho), Packwood (Oreg.), and Saxbe (Ohio). Some of those voting "nay" did so because of lack of service in their states; Sen. Church of Idaho commented, for example, "Apparently, the System could not find a way around the State of Idaho to get to the west coast"..... CANADIAN PACIFIC will auction off 90 years' worth of memorabilia soon. Free catalog from Room 117 Windsor Station, Montreal 101, Canada..... NATIONWIDE AMTRAK menus will go into use shortly. There will be regional specialty dishes in various sections of the nation, but each train will have a single dinner menu. Initial examinations of some of the menus elicited favorable reactions from railfans. More on this soon..... AMTRAK WILL have a budget for advertising this summer, says Western Regional Manager Bob Edgar, so look for some promotion of your local Amtrak route one of these days..... "ON THE Atchison, Topeka and the PSA" goes a current radio airline commercial. Says Paul Rayton, "Is nothing sacred?"..... SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN called Amtrak ticket office to make reservations on the CHAMPION, and the employee insisted that there was no such train (this happened in May 1972, note, not in 1971 or 1970)..... AMTRAK-PAINTED, interior-redecorated Santa Fe coaches are now running on the COAST STARLIGHT..... AUTOMAT CARS may return to the SUNSET LTD for the summer due to equipment shortage and need for second, snack-type diner. But which is worse--to be hungry or have indigestion?..... WRITES READER William Herring of Atlanta: "The (SOUTHERN CRESCENT) is amazing! It carries an aura of old-time railroading at its best. No tricky uniforms or airline-style meals, but clean, clean Pullmans, comfortable club car with new magazines..., diner with plenty of waiters and lots of silver, glass & linen... And the warmth and courtesy of the personnel, who actually seem to <u>care</u> about the passenger's fun and comfort, and are not just acting out a managerial scenario".....

Urban-Suburban Transit

transpo 72

BIG HIGHWAY-VS-TRANSIT DECISION NEARS

At the June 6 primary election in California, San Francisco Bay Area voters will be deciding more than candidates for office next November. The controversial "Southern Crossing" (see RTN, Mar. 20) question is on the ballot as Proposition A, and environmentalists, rapid transit endorsers, and those who are just plain fed up with too many cars in the Bay Area are urging a "no" vote. A "yes" vote would permit construction to begin on another bridge across the bay, a move that opponents argue would be certain to mean also more freeways, more parking lots, more congestion—in short, a vote for more autos instead of balanced transportation. Virtually all Bay Area cities except Oakland are opposed to the bridge, as are numerous groups ranging from the Pollution Control District to the Coast Guard. Campaign literature opposing the bridge cites the fact that BART should be given a chance to prove itself before jumping into a $645 million (compare that figure with Amtrak's funding!) construction job: "(It) represents the transportation thinking of nearly 30 years ago, when...air pollution was not yet recognized as a deadly menace."

DOT TO BUY NEW BURLINGTON CARS

The Dept. of Transportation announced this month a grant to Chicago's West Suburban Mass Transit District to purchase 25 new commuter cars for Burlington Northern's Chicago-Aurora commuter line. The DOT also will buy 21 locomotives and 94 bilevel cars from the railroad, refurbish them, and lease them back to the carrier. Total cost is $25.2 million, according to the Wall Street Journal.

TRANSPO 72 OPENS

Transpo 72, the United States' International Transportation Exposition, opens May 27 at Dulles International Airport near Washington and runs thru June 4 (see official logo at top of this page). The exhibit is costing the U.S. $5 million, but arrangers hope that sales of transportation technology to other nations as a result of the show will generate revenue that will more than offset the expense.

The show was originally to be an air show, but DOT Secretary Volpe turned it toward other transportation modes as well. One oddity of the event is the fact that in order to reach the displays of farout people movers and other transit modes, the forecast 200,000-a-day visitors will have to go thru the usual mundane traffic jams to reach the site by highway. The Postal Service has issued a postcard celebrating the event.

BART OPENING SET FOR SEPTEMBER

The Bay Area Rapid Transit system is now schedule to begin initial operations about September 1. Things have been going smoothly recently, with cars being tested and computer control worked out. Cars now being delivered are said to have fewer and fewer bugs in them. The fall opening will be using 28 miles of line between Oakland and Fremont, to the south. Transbay service might begin in approximately one year.

RAIL LINES BLOCKED BY ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATORS

In the riotous demonstrations immediately following Pres. Nixon's announcement of intensification of the Vietnam war early this month, demonstrators in some places blocked commuter lines by sitting on tracks. The SP Peninsula line was blocked at times, and also the Los Angeles-San Diego track. Life Magazine (May 19) ran a full-page photo of students at Davis, Calif., sitting on the SP right of way.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"If we had great problems we also had great assets. Our network of right of way and trackage is the greatest in the world. And we had some of the finest passenger train service such as the Santa Fe's Super Chief and the Metroliners already in service to the public. Then we had 15 million passengers each year who needed the trains. And we knew there were countless millions more who would ride good trains if the service could be improved."

—Roger Lewis at Amtrak ceremonies May 1

"Long-haul passenger trains, from lack of patronage, may be beyond rescue. There will always be a place for railroad travel because of unique advantages. But it would be hard to mobilize a whole new generation of riders, such are the millions of Americans who've never been on a train."

—Rochester (NY) Democrat & Chronicle, May 6

"Railroad travel is the accepted means of travel in Europe. It offers fast, frequent, punctual and economic service from everywhere to everywhere. See Europe the real way—by railway."

—From a current European timetable

"Government interest in transportation should not be to measure profitability as a goal in itself. Rather, we should be striving to insure that transportation services are available for those citizens who need the service when they need it. This may or may not mean that a particular transportation service makes money."

—Sen. Vance Hartke in Senate debate, Apr. 27

"...as powerful as we have become throughout the world, and as many achievements as we have in the areas of science and space, the fact remains that the United States of America has without question the worst rail system of any major nation in the world."

—Sen. Lowell Weicker, Senate debate, Apr. 27

WE'RE MAKING TRAINS WORTH TRAVELING AGAIN

RAIL TRAVELER'S DIARY

with: **Paul Rayton**

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Date: December 16, 1970

Thanks to several previous unfortunate experiences on trains of the Union Pacific Railroad, it was not without reservations (no pun intended) that we elected to take the CITY OF LOS ANGELES/KANSAS CITY to Kansas City.

Mr. Jackson, Porter-in-Charge of sleeping car 101 ("Pacific Home"), welcomed us to his domain and showed us to bedroom E. This sleeper, plus a coach somewhere up front, were destined for Kansas City, while all the other cars would continue to Chicago. Until Cheyenne the next afternoon we would be a part of the CITY OF LOS ANGELES.

We pulled out of Los Angeles Union Station at 12:20pm, right on time. Our train was slightly longer than usual, as the UP was bracing for the influx of Christmas passengers.

We soon rolled out from under the leaden skies threatening the city and began our ascent of Cajon Pass thru smog-filtered sunlight.

It's fun riding thru this pass in daylight. You can see wild, dramatic rock formations during much of the climb. The ride uphill is so even and smooth you forget you are on a train ascending a formidable grade, and wonder why those trucks and buses on the parallel highway are passing you so easily. No matter; once the crest was passed, we picked up speed and the ride felt more like that of a train.

The trouble with traveling in the winter is that it gets dark so early.

We left Barstow right on time (4:20), and a few miles later, at Daggot, began heading northeast toward Las Vegas. The sun was disappearing now. Looking backwards out the dome we saw the red-tinged clouds of eventide hovering over wintry desert dryness. It was completely dark 30 minutes later. Sitting in the dome, I recalled reading about the multicolored glories of Afton Canyon, thru which we right then were passing. A few minutes later, walking toward the dining car, we could tell the train was threading the canyon, for our walk swerved back and forth with the turns of the train.

Dinnertime was image-shattering time. First of all, the crew were exuberant, very pleasant and helpful. The famous Union Pacific dining-car-in-the-dome had been surreptitiously discontinued a few months before, and we were relegated to a "standard" 48-seat dining car—but a very nice one with well-appointed interior, full linens and silver service augmenting each place setting, and fresh carnations on each table. The handsome menu, headed by the train's own name, provided a good choice of entrees at reasonable prices. There was a very cute menu especially for children. The Union Pacific had certainly spared little in setting up this dining car!

The dinner menu listed three Table D'Hote dinners, including Broiled Swordfish, Charbroiled Ham Steak, and Breast of Chicken, plus other a la carte items. We decided to have a little party to celebrate the start of our Christmas trip, so we ordered the $5.50 Special Sirloin Steak Dinner, which included soup, salad, home made French fried potatoes, garlic toasted rolls, dessert and beverage.

To accompany our dinner, I ordered a bottle of the "especially bottled" red wine. I am always impressed by trivialities such as this. Only one other line, the Southern Pacific, surprisingly, had private stock wine. The wine itself, tho undistinguished, was a welcome adjunct to the meal. The steak was tender and juicy and the special tang of the charcoal broiling was clearly apparent. Most important, it was fired to a turn.

After an excellent apple dumpling for dessert, we sat and discussed the dinnerware of the UP over our coffee and tea. The UP had a distinctive set of chinaware. It was designed about the time (late '30's) that the first "streamliners" were being introduced to the country, and the pattern reflected the early infatuation with the concept of fast, "almost as if on wings" rail travel. A large, varied setting of white china was developed, each piece marked by the singular, impressionistic rendition of this streamliner motif.

7:45pm—image-shattering time again: we arrived in Las Vegas station 15 minutes early. The schedule already included a 15 minute stop anyway, so we had 30 minutes during which we walked across the street to a casino and my wife had her first encounter with "one-armed bandits." She came out 50¢ ahead and it was difficult to get her back on the train!

After departing Las Vegas we took time to sit again in the darkened dome and listen to small talk, have a drink, and watch the lights of the "strip" fall into the distance. By and by the black enormity of the desert night overcame all lights and we soon retired for the evening.

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"Look at that!!"

Light suddenly cascaded into our bedroom. My wife had flung up the window shade. "Look!" she continued. Outside was a truly spectacular wake-up panorama. Early morning sunlight pouring obliquely over jagged, snow-topped buttes. Snow! When I'd gone to bed I was hardly out of Death Valley! Magically, overnight, I had transited here to another world.

We were in the middle of the Wasatch mountain range. The fragile hues of this first light would be too fleeting to stay in bed one second longer. I jumped into some clothing and rushed for the dome with my camera. In spite of my haste, I noticed that Mr. Jackson had shined my shoes during the night.

After the sun rose higher in the sky, it slipped temporarily behind some clouds, so I felt safe in taking a time out for breakfast.

The morning meal was fairly straightforward, but well and amply served. Before we had finished with breakfast, the train had finished with Utah and we were across the border into Wyoming. We returned to our bedroom only to discover that the Porter had converted it from sleeping back to sitting room for daytime use. He had left out two pillows for extra comfort during the day.

The balance of the morning was given over alternately to reading and drinking in the exciting scenery. This route across Wyoming couldn't claim the mountainous splendors of the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR route, but snow lay light and bright across the plains and villages this day, like frosting on marbled cake, lending a whole new depth and contrast to the gray plain grasses and layered tiers of sedimentary rocks. For sightseeing guidance I had brought along an old copy of a UP publication, "Along the Way," a listing of points of interest. A good thing I'd brought it, too, for the booklet, last printed in 1967, was no longer available on the train.

Wyoming with the cloak of winter snow was really worth the price of the trip. We passed by small towns, with two or three church steeples pointing up into a crystal-clear, blue sky. Icy ponds along our trail reflected sunlight into the dome from an unexpected angle. Drifts of snow traced an outline of tracks and ties.

One of the pleasant aspects of train travel is the ability to move around, to view the scenery from a variety of places: dome seat, bedroom window, coach seat, dining car seat—and out the tail end of the last car...except on this train. Because of the considerable switching of cars done en route, the crew car was carried at the very rear, eliminating any back-window track gazing.

Back in Ogden our train had picked up a few thru cars for Chicago from the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO. Being asleep, I hadn't noticed those cars being cut into the consist. At Green River, Wyoming, we were to connect with another UP train, the CITY OF PORTLAND, at which point we would pick up more thru cars from Portland. We would then be well on our way to becoming the train informally known as the CITY OF EVERYWHERE (the Streamliners CITY OF LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO, PORTLAND, KANSAS CITY, and DENVER, not to mention the CHALLENGER).

After a dramatic canyon-side view of the Green River, we pulled down into the town bearing its name. Both trains were into the station on time, so there would be little delay. Arranging all the extra Christmas-traffic cars into the proper sequencing would obviously take longer than the 20 minutes alloted. So, while keeping a wary eye on the yard activities, I wandered a couple of blocks into town to view Yuletide street decorations and replenish my supply of film. We pulled out of Green River about 10 minutes late, with a long train of some 18 cars. Four "E" units up front roared and smoked darkly as we raced along Bitter Creek, toward the Continental Divide.

After the exercise of running around Green River, I was really ready for the noontime meal. A luncheon menu was presented to us as we sat down. Moderate prices were again evident—nothing over $2.25. Three entrees were listed (French Fried Shrimp, Spaghetti, or a Hot Beef Sandwich), none of which particularly appealed to me, so I ordered a Breast of Chicken sandwich a la carte, served with cole slaw and beverage. We ordered another bottle of that UP private stock wine, this time white. Sunlight coming in thru both wine and water glasses created a sparkling, rippling display of liquid on our tablecloth. Outside, snow was blowing and the chill of winter gripped the land, but here in the dining car the warmth of the sun could be felt and seen.

We returned to the dome car after lunch for more scenery viewing. I wondered why the dome was so uncrowded. There must have been some 150 passengers aboard, but they were so spread out among the many-destinationed cars that they seldom seemed concentrated in any particular area—even the domes.

We were rolling eastward along the main line of the Union Pacific, the first transcontinental rail route. Historic towns of the old West dotted the scene, towns like Rawlins and Laramie. Land once roamed by buffalo herds. We were high on a sort of plateau, crossing the Rocky Mountains. We had been above 6000' ever since entering Wyoming. As we approached Cheyenne (elevation 7165') dusk was falling and the colored lights of the city beckoned to us across the chilly flatlands and low, rolling rises. We were going to be arriving on time (4:25pm) and, being due for another of those ridiculously long station stops—50 minutes this time, my wife and I would leave the train for downtown (the heart of the city was less than two blocks away) to go shopping.

(To be concluded.)

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